

### **Tax Commissioner Questions**

1. State law requires that all state tax commissioners “shall have had at least 5 years’ experience in government or the private sector, dealing with state or local tax matters.” Please describe how your background meets this requirement.
2. Given the increasing level of complexity of current tax laws, in part caused by revisions put in place by the adoption of Proposal A, do you see the need for changing the type of training required of assessors?
3. The multiplier tables have recently undergone a great deal of revision. Are there any changes in the tables that you feel should be made in the next few years?
4. How do you feel about the notion of use value assessment for agricultural property?
5. What would you propose as a public policy to deal with the problems of urban sprawl?
6. Can you think of any methods whereby the State Tax Commission could save on administrative costs?
7. Do you have any plans for organizational change within the Commission?
8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the State Tax Commission?

1. State law requires that all state tax commissioners "shall have had at least five years' experience in government or the private sector, dealing with state or local tax matters." Please describe how your background meets this requirement.

I have 27 years experience with a public accounting firm with a substantial focus on state and local tax matters.

2. Given the increasing level of complexity of current tax laws, in part caused by revisions put in place by the adoption of Proposal A, do you see the need for changing the type of training required by assessors?

It is important that assessors at all levels have knowledge of :

- Identifying homestead property.
- Identifying qualified agricultural property.
- Administering the assessment cap, both in calculating the capped taxable value and identifying transfers of ownership that result in the value being uncapped.

Assessor training is a statutory function of the state assessor's board. Although the appointment has not been made, it is customary for the chair of the STC occupy one position on that board. In that capacity, I would have an interest in examining assessor training on these subjects.

3. The multiplier tables have recently undergone a great deal of revision. Are there any changes in the tables that you feel should be made in the next few years?

The tables are intended to reflect market value. To date, I have not reviewed any data that suggests that changes are or are not warranted.

4. How do you feel about the notion of use value assessment for agricultural property?

My understanding is that pure use value assessment would require an amendment to Michigan's constitution, although there may be ways to accomplish similar results through specific taxes levied instead of the property tax. Depending on the specifics, the STC likely would have a role in implementation. Its objective should be providing accurate, clear and understandable information to assessors and taxpayers. At the moment I am neutral on the "notion " of use value assessment.

5. What would you propose as a public policy to deal with the problems of urban sprawl?

The Governor has appointed the Land Use Leadership Council that is attempting to address this issue. It has received several inches of background papers that attempt to suggest policies to address this problem. My impression is that no

single policy will address this issue. Under my understanding of the STC function, it would have virtually no role in making policy concerning urban sprawl. I would be happy to attempt a more specific response to a question that provides more guidance or links a specific policy to the role of the STC.

6. Can you think of any methods whereby the State Tax Commission could save on administrative costs?

At this point I have not yet identified such savings, although I do not presume that such potential savings do not exist.

7. Do you have any plans for organizational change within the Commission?

At this date, no. I would mention however, that while the STC can make recommendations, it has no direct authority for staff organization.

8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the State Tax Commission?

The appointment of a three-member body for fixed terms with the requirement that one member be from a party other than the governor's, as well as the designation as a type 1 agency, provide a level of independence that can provide some increased confidence to representatives of both taxpayers and taxing jurisdictions. Because a governor is viewed as accountable for anything that occurs within the executive branch these same attributes can be viewed as a disadvantage. The existence of a separate STC has perhaps provided a heightened focus on matters relating to the administration of the property tax that, on balance, has probably been healthy over time